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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the evaluation of the academic English language program at the International University of Japan (IUJ), focusing on some common evaluation problems and approaches taken at IUJ to solving them and drawing on recent theory. The first of these techniques is a systematic approach to program data collection using varied kinds of information: qualitative and quantitative, formal and informal, and information that is both directly and indirectly relevant. Sources of information include test scores, student feedback, language teachers, program and university records, academic faculty, administrators, alumni, sponsors, and other programs. The second technique is a dual focus on evaluation process and product. Efforts are made to maximize the time, expertise, and motivation of participants and to produce an annual program report useful to both program staff and outsiders. The third technique involves viewing the program from two additional perspectives: (1) having a role as part of a larger "ecosystem," and (2) making decisions by balancing each option with the direct or indirect costs of an alternative. These techniques have been found useful at IUJ for reducing the problems inherent in program evaluation. (MSE)

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ED 367 160

EAP PROGRAM EVALUATION IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT: A CASE FROM JAPAN

Mark Sawyer

INTRODUCTION

For numerous reasons, language program evaluation is seldom a smooth, straightforward process. To begin with, program administrators and curriculum developers often have only limited expertise on testing and evaluation. If they do possess the appropriate knowledge, it is still no easy matter to win the cooperation of all parties involved in order to effectively implement evaluation procedures; and even if all concerned are favorably disposed toward the endeavor, evaluations normally take place at the end of a program, when the administrators, teachers, and students need to redirect their thinking to the next term or program or project, or perhaps to a vacation. At the International University of Japan (IUJ), the English Language Program (ELP) is typical of language programs in general in that its evaluation process is subject to each of the above problems, but we have also had a certain amount of success in alleviating each of them.

The purpose of this paper is to describe certain aspects of the IUJ-ELP's evaluation process, in the hope that other language program evaluators can either benefit from our experiences or can provide us with some better ideas. My description will focus on ways we have tried to incorporate some very useful recent work that has been done on language program evaluation. I will start by showing how we have applied J.D. Brown's (1989) "systematic approach to curriculum improvement and maintenance," and then discuss our evaluation process in relation to Michael Long's (1984) ideas on "process and product" in evaluation. Finally, I will show how fruitful ideas for program evaluation can be generated by looking at the program from certain additional points of view: one is is as part of an "ecosystem" (Holliday and Cooke 1982), and the other in terms of "opportunity costs" (Swales 1989).

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PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The IUJ- ELP was one of the first in a rapidly growing number of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs in Japan charged with preparing Japanese students to do English-medium academic studies. Whereas many of the other programs, such as the Japan programs of Temple University and Southern Illinois University, prepare students to do the main part of their studies in an English-speaking country, the entire curriculum at IUJ is undertaken on its campus in Niigata Prefecture. IUJ began with one academic program, a course in International Relations leading to an M.A. degree; in 1988 it established a second graduate school offering an M.B.A. in International Management. There are two main student populations: Japanese company employees who are sponsored by their employers to study for two years, and students from abroad who are attending on scholarship. These Japanese and non-Japanese populations are about equal in size (currently about 120 each), and the international students come from over thirty countries. In the ELP, we deal primarily with the Japanese students, because the international students tend to be stronger in English and in university-level study skills. All applicants to IUJ take TOEFL as part of the admissions procedure, the current range of our students being 450-670. The university is now in the process of establishing short-term non-degree courses, and there is talk of a third graduate school, dealing with International Development.

The ELP started out in 1983 with a full-time staff of one and four temporary instructors to run the first Intensive English Program (IEP) before the university formally opened. Now, seven years later, we have a full-time staff of seven faculty members, and an additional five to ten temporary instructors for our summer Intensive English Program, which has gradually expanded over the years to its current length of twelve weeks. In addition to the summer IEP, we offer two terms of credited EAP courses as a continuation

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of the work we began in the summer, but we consider the IEP to be the core of our curriculum and the time when students can clearly make progress. The IEP involves over seven hours of class per day, with a daily average of four hours of homework, and a full schedule of extracurricular activities. The IEP is currently divided into seven components, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

A TYPICAL PROGRAM DAY

TIME	ACTIVITY
7.00-7.30	Morning Warm-up and Jogging
8.20-9.30	TEXT SKILLS I
9.40-10.50	TEXT SKILLS II
11.00-11.40	LANGUAGE LAB
11.50-12.30	ACCURACY DEVELOPMENT
12.30-1.30	Lunch
1.30-3.00	COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION
3.10-4.20	SEMINAR SKILLS I
4.30-5.40	SEMINAR SKILLS II
6.00-7.00	Dinner
7.30-8.30	Video Programs
8.30-9.30	Computer Room (assignments)

Although we have always been eager to gather information to help in developing the curriculum, applying our evaluation findings has always been an ambiguous undertaking, as there has never been a clear consensus on the goals of the university curriculum, and the addition of new programs has further confused the issue. Therefore, it is somewhat difficult for the ELP to judge clearly how successful it has been within its institutional context. This situation is further complicated by the fact that student success in dealing with the university's curriculum may not be closely related to success in terms of what their sponsors expect from them after graduation. Although the IUJ situation may be unique in some respects, there are ambiguities involved in the relationship between any language program and its wider institutional and societal context, and a sound evaluation process can go a long way toward resolving them.

THE "SYSTEMATIC" APPROACH

J. D. Brown defines evaluation as "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved" (Brown, 1989:223). This definition may seem a bit awkward in its length, but the awkwardness itself serves to demonstrate that the concept of evaluation is sufficiently complex as to be very difficult to capture in one sentence. I would like to focus on two elements in the definition - systematicity and all relevant information - and show how they relate to the process of evaluation at IUJ.

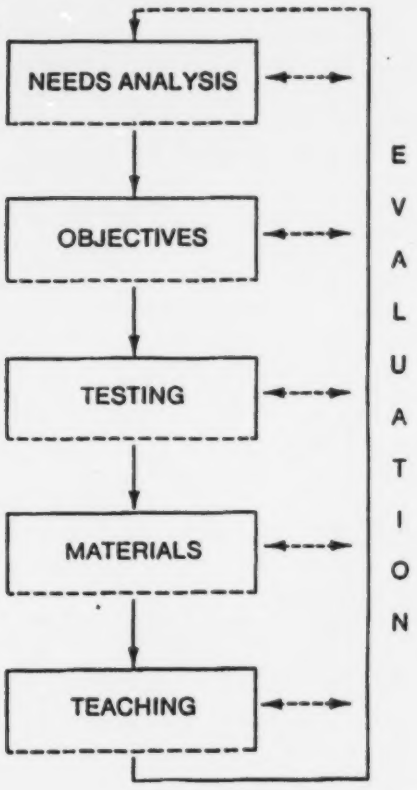
Systematicity. Brown's use of "systematic" can be usefully interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation of "systematic" is that the data collection and analysis itself should be done systematically. This may seem rather obvious, but it is worth highlighting because this sense of "systematic" should not be taken to mean that data which is collected non-systematically can not be part of evaluation, but rather that the evaluators should work toward imposing as much systematicity as possible on data, some of which may appear very unsystematic at first. For example, comments made in the school cafeteria about the

program by academic professors should not necessarily be disregarded, but if they are deemed to constitute useful information, then efforts should be made to gather a representative sample of them and record them consistently.

The second interpretation of "systematic" is that evaluation functions in a specific way as part of a system. A diagram of Brown's proposed model of evaluation will clarify this sense of "systematic."

Figure 2

Systematic approach for designing and maintaining language curriculum
(Brown, 1989:235)



As can be clearly seen, the system for designing curriculum goes through five stages from needs analysis to teaching, with evaluation providing input at each stage, and then the actual teaching provides input to revise the previous needs analysis. The most important thing to note about this model is that evaluation has a role at every stage, and is thus a constant process. It also should be understood that whereas curriculum design can follow a logical linear sequence from needs analysis to teaching, it need not, as evaluation occurring at any stage can have an influence on any other stage. This feature in the model gives recognition to the fact that evaluation is rarely a straightforward process.

All relevant information. The second important element of Brown's definition of evaluation to be focused on is the idea of using "all relevant information." Brown lists 24 data-gathering procedures which can be grouped into six categories, which can in turn be combined into one of two larger categories, according to the criterion of whether the evaluator is an "outsider looking in," or a "facilitator drawing information out" (Brown, 1989:233). This is a useful way to conceptualize the possibilities for evaluation procedures, but to describe the evaluation process at IUJ, it may be more useful to think in terms of types of information, and sources of of information. The types of information we use at IUJ include qualitative as well as quantitative, informal as well as formal, and information which is indirectly as well as directly relevant. The sources of information we use include student test scores, other program and university records, the students themselves, the ELP faculty, the academic faculties, administrators, alumni, sponsors, and other programs.

TYPES OF INFORMATION

Quantitative vs. qualitative. Concerning the use of both quantitative and qualitative information, there should not be much controversy: it is well accepted even in pure research that not everything can be quantified. However, there are other reasons for balancing out quantitative with qualitative data. Among the people who use evaluation reports to make decisions, there are doubtless many who find numbers most useful and/or impressive, but there are certainly others who are more or less innumerate, and there is a third group who like to see the presence of numbers to give them a sense of security that the evaluation is real, but in fact what they read is the qualitative part. Beretta (1989) cites a number of conflicting research findings on this issue. Another reason for not overemphasizing quantitative data is that such an emphasis limits the level of quality of the evaluation to the evaluator's level of statistical expertise . Of course it can be argued that it is the responsibility of a program evaluator be well-versed in research design and statistics, but the greater responsibility is in fact to evaluate the program as effectively as possible given the presently available resources.

Formal vs. informal. The use of informally gathered information may seem to contradict the need for systematicity, but there are good reasons to include it. The first is that people are often more candid in informal situations than in formal ones; it's quite possible that one can extract better information from some academic faculty members while chatting in the hallway than in even the most well-constructed questionnaire. The second reason is that the same faculty member is more likely to fill out that questionnaire conscientiously if he has recently spoken personally with one or more of the people responsible for it. Especially in a small educational community, and even more especially in Japan, informal contacts can often be considered a necessity before formal requests have any chance of being fulfilled.

Directly vs. indirectly relevant. Indirectly relevant information is that which does not seem to relate the program as currently conceived, but could play some role in the future. One example of the effective use of indirectly relevant data at IUJ can be seen during the period of the establishment of the School of International Management in affiliation with Dartmouth University's business school. At that time, the representatives from the Dartmouth side were enthusiastic about incorporating the "Rassias Method" of language teaching into the IUJ language curriculum. By researching this method in a timely way (in fact it is an audiolingually-oriented method which relies more or less on the teacher's manic behavior to keep the students attentive), and including a diplomatic critique of it in our program evaluation document, we were able to show them that we were of course familiar with the method, and that we were already incorporating its strong points into our program while avoiding its shortcomings. By doing this, we gained their support without having to explicitly accept or reject the method they were promoting.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Test scores. Student test scores are for us, as for most programs, the most compelling measure of success. We have been working hard to develop valid and reliable criterion-referenced tests to judge the effect of each component of our program, but we still have a long way to go. Moreover, even when we have achievement measures we are satisfied with, we will still be left with the equally difficult job of explaining them to non-specialists outside of the program whose decisions and attitudes may affect us.

Students. Evaluations of our courses by the students, although by no means an accurate measure of success, have nevertheless been by far the most useful source of feedback for us. We have found that once students realize that their opinion really is expected, and that it will be paid attention to, they often express their views quite thoughtfully and frankly. A lot of fine-tuning of our program has been possible due to student evaluations. One example is the level of intensity of our IEP. As could be seen in Figure 1, the program is very intensive, and this level must be maintained for twelve weeks. However, years of feedback from students concerning the intensity of the program have shown us that only a

few consider the present level to be a hardship, and years when we lightened up the schedule a bit, many students felt somehow cheated.

ELP instructors. All instructors are asked to write out a brief formal evaluation after each course, but especially interesting to us is the feedback we get from the instructors who come to teach in our summer Intensive English Program. While it is hard for the permanent staff to look objectively at the curriculum which they both designed and taught, our summer instructors are competent EAP teachers who have to implement an intensive curriculum without having had input into its content. Where weaknesses exist, the temporary instructors can generally be counted on to notice them.

Program and university records. University records provide us with data concerning learner performance outside the program, notably their grades in their academic courses and their final thesis grade. Since the students' degree of success in their academic programs is most often taken to be the ultimate measure of the success of an EAP Program, no amount of program-internal testing and evaluation will be sufficient. The problem with using course grades as a measure of success is that we know very little of the process by which professors arrived at those course grades. This has certainly been the case at IUJ, where course grades and level of English ability, or course grades and success in our IEP, have not correlated at all. Since nearly all students graduate with respectable grade point averages, we have not worried about this situation too much, but we are nevertheless vulnerable to criticism from the academic faculty.

Academic faculty. To pre-empt possible faculty criticism, it is very useful to find out as early as possible how professors view their students' language proficiency. The most systematic way to do this is through a questionnaire. This was done once during the first year of the program, and is now being done a second time (Uehara 1990). Regardless of the quality of the information from the questionnaire, it serves the purpose of showing the faculty that we care about our program, and if they do not use this convenient opportunity to voice their criticisms in a form where they can be constructive, those faculty members may be less likely to express their views later in a less constructive manner.

Administrators. Administrators play an extremely important role in the evaluation process, but in a different way than the parties mentioned so far. From time to time we can gather good information from them, but in general the crucial flow of information with administrators is in the other direction. The important thing is to present the results of evaluation activities to them so that they will see good reason to support our program in the future.

Alumni. Alumni should be an excellent source of data about the effectiveness of the program, since they have the perspective to see how well the ELP and the IUJ curriculum prepared them for their new duties upon return to their companies. Regrettably, we are only now beginning to take on this job systematically, and have sent out a pilot questionnaire to 50 of our approximately 500 alumni. In terms of anecdotal data, however, we have had many productive informal conversations with alumni when they have returned to the campus for various events, and these conversations have led to a number of innovations.

Sponsors. It may also be worthwhile to see what the students' corporate sponsors think about the job we are doing, but it is difficult to obtain this information in any organized way, since we often do not even know what level in the sponsoring company we should address. Informal means of data collection may be useful, however. For example, when some of the company sponsors attend entrance and graduation ceremonies, our staff could take advantage of those opportunities to casually ask a few carefully chosen questions.

Other programs. Since there are many similarities in goals, methodology, and materials among EAP programs around the world, it seems irrational that there is not more communication among these programs. We have started to gather documentation from a number of programs in Japan and the United States, and we would be delighted to share materials with additional ones. Starting the year before last, we have also been sending one faculty member per year to teach in the Intensive English Program of the World Maritime

University in Sweden, and one of their faculty members will join our program this summer. This sort of staff exchange between programs with similar students and goals has already had significant benefits for both programs.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT EVALUATIONS

In his article on process and product evaluations, Michael Long focuses on process evaluation, defining it as "the systematic observation of classroom behavior with reference to the theory of (second) language development which underlies the program being evaluated" (Long 1984: 415). He points out that if product evaluation, carried out carefully with a true experimental design, and not subject to any threats to internal validity, shows a program to have arrived at the desired outcomes, we still cannot say that the curriculum or methodology caused those outcomes without examining actual classroom processes. Long does not discourage the use of product evaluations, but rather argues that both types are essential.

More specifically, what Long has in mind with process evaluation involves experimental research design with control groups and randomization, periodic video or audio recording, transcriptions, and careful examination of selected aspects of teacher and student behavior motivated by the SLA research literature, such as error correction, or ratio of referential to display questions. Although the rigor inherent in this approach is an ideal worthy of striving for, there are limitations in the approach Long advocates when applied to real programs, especially EAP programs.

The first limitation is that Long's approach does not seem to make a distinction between research and evaluation. Whereas research should lead to generalizable conclusions, evaluation must lead to specific decisions (Isaac & Michael, 1981). As Daniel Stufflebeam, a pioneer in modern educational evaluation, put it, "the purpose of evaluation is to improve, not to prove." Beretta (1986) argues along the same lines, claiming that Long's emphasis on internal validity shows that he does not recognize evaluation as the "applied research" it is. The kind of process evaluation outlined by Long could lead to answers to some fundamental questions of curriculum developers and teachers in the long run, but is not likely to provide the relevant answers needed in the short run.

A second limitation of Long's view of process evaluation is that it does not take into account the fact that EAP represents much more than language development. Therefore, it is not feasible to evaluate the program in terms of any one theory. At the very least, we need an SLA theory and an academic skill learning theory.

A third and related limitation is the practical one of being constrained by expertise, time, and motivation. The rigorous procedure outlined by Long would require considerable amounts of each. Without the full cooperation of a good-sized staff of experts who buy into the same theories and and accept the same research priorities, it would be difficult to see such an evaluation process through to completion. On the other hand, this limitation does not imply that the disciplined process evaluation is not a worthy ideal to pursue, but merely shows that our expectations cannot be too high at first, while the first two limitations serve mostly to caution that other concerns need to be balanced against those that Long emphasizes.

IUJ application of process evaluation. While we cannot claim to be carrying out process evaluations according to Long's criteria, we do take steps to ensure that our curriculum is carried out as devised. For our summer IEP, we start by sending out course syllabi and teaching materials to temporary instructors before they arrive. Upon arrival, we hold pre-service component orientation meetings, and component coordination meetings continue on an ongoing basis. The director observes every section of every component at least once. Additionally, all instructors keep a cumulative lesson plan notebook on their desks, so that instructors of the same (or different) components can compare notes, and the component coordinators and program director can see how well the curriculum is being followed.

Midterm student evaluations also provide clues to corroborate that the curriculum is really being followed, and that is is worthy of following. An additional feature in our next summer program will be student committees for each component. These committees will consist of a representative from each section, and will meet once a week to discuss with the component coordinator and the program director differences in their experiences.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT OF EVALUATION

The experience of the IUJ-ELP in relation to program evaluation can be best captured by borrowing the terms process and product, and using them in a completely different way from the previous section. The process of evaluation will roughly correspond to the formative aspects of evaluation, and the products of evaluation will primarily refer to the summative aspects of evaluation.

PROCESS

The elements of time, expertise, and motivation have been previously mentioned as constraints affecting the success of program evaluation. What is needed is an evaluation process which can maximize the amounts of these elements available. To increase the amount of time available, it is necessary for evaluation to become a high priority activity, and for as many people as possible to be share the work. To increase the amount of expertise available, it is necessary to provide direction and encouragement, and to delimit the areas of expertise necessary for each staff member. Finally, to increase motivation, everyone involved (especially, but not exclusively, the program staff) needs to understand how they themselves can benefit from the evaluation. Of course, it is very easy to see how these elements overlap and affect each other.

Time. In the IUJ-ELP, each faculty member has a responsibility for a certain component of the curriculum, a responsibility which includes evaluation. Dividing the work up among seven faculty members makes the workload bearable, and the director is freed to take responsibility for promoting consistency in the evaluation procedures across components, and coherence in the curriculum as a whole.

Expertise. With regard to expertise, we can generally assume sufficient knowledge in the area of curriculum development when we hire our faculty, but this is certainly not the case with regard to the evaluation of that curriculum. We started a campaign two years ago to increase knowledge on topics related to evaluation, with more experienced staff giving faculty colloquia on topics such as criterion-referenced testing, behavioral objectives, and questionnaire design. Starting this year, we are also delegating stages in Brown's (1989) model of curriculum development to the faculty , i.e. one member will be primarily responsible for organizing and serving as a resource person for needs analysis, another for objectives, etc.

Motivation. Motivation for evaluation is generated by giving the staff good reason to participate fully in the process. In the IUJ-ELP, everyone realizes that the curriculum they developed will get even better as a result of the evaluation process, and they also know that the degree to which they get useful information depends on the amount of care they put into designing their evaluations. Likewise, the degree to which their students' progress will be evident depends on the quality of the tests the instructors devise.

Another reason to get involved in the process is the opportunity for professional development. At IUJ this is especially easy, because faculty promotion is based on a point system that recognizes faculty colloquia and conference presentations. The result is that individual faculty members explore some new area which is most often related to curriculum or evaluation, provide new knowledge to others through a faculty colloquium, get feedback from the faculty, develop it further into a conference presentation, get more feedback, and then apply the by then well-developed ideas back to their area of the curriculum or evaluation process. The recent papers by Hayes (1990) and Uehara (1990), as well as the present paper, are all parts of this process.

An additional point to made about motivation is that the evaluation process at IUJ is essentially non-threatening. One reason this is possible is that our emphasis is always on curriculum rather than teacher evaluation. Debriefings after class observations by the director center around variations in approaches to implementing the curriculum, and although instructors may add questions to student evaluation forms specifically relating to their teaching technique, the program-wide questions focus principally on syllabus and materials . Of course, anticipating the results of each set of student course evaluations brings some anxiety, but since evaluation is now an integrated part of the program culture,

this anxiety becomes a routine aspect of the teaching experience, and translates into incentive to further improve the course. The IUJ-ELP currently de-emphasizes teacher evaluation in order to maintain total commitment of the teaching staff to the evaluation process and to the professional development that goes along with it. However, as the curriculum gets more and more finely tuned, and commitment to the process is less of an issue, it is easy to foresee a time when teacher evaluation may be highlighted more.

PRODUCT

Although the process of evaluation itself serves the formative purpose within the program of providing direction for future improvement, it is usually the case that administrators and other groups in decision-making positions require some product with which to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. In the case of the IUJ-ELP, we have been fortunate in having very little direct outside interference, but as we grow and demand more resources, members of the Policy Shaping Community, or PSC (see Beretta, 1990) have begun to take more interest in our use of those resources.

Following the principle of division of labor and expertise elaborated above, we now produce an annual Intensive English Program Final Report, with each component coordinator writing the sections relevant to that component. The emphasis is on readability, in terms of vocabulary (no SLA, or evaluation, jargon), balance between qualitative and quantitative data, and adjustable length. The report starts with a one-page very broad overview by the director, then one-page component overviews by each of the coordinators, then one-page descriptions of the criterion-referenced tests used, then summaries of student evaluations, and so on, gradually moving into charts and graphs of student performance and finally some of the relevant raw data. Our intent is that PSC members will read as little or as much as they wish, but come away with an overall picture of the nature and success of the program, and the level of effort and professionalism that we put into it. We do not try to hide problems, but unless they are problems that the particular reader can potentially assist us in solving, we mention them straightforwardly but briefly, with an intended solution immediately following.

We are also in the process of producing an ongoing program document, again divided into many short sections, in which we are compiling general program information, a description of the curriculum development process, a rationale for our curriculum, brief summaries of student performance and evaluation data for year-by-year comparison, etc. This report is intended to be useful to new instructors and to people from other EAP programs. It also should prove useful to ourselves, in serving as a reason to step back from time to time and look at the program as a whole.

THE ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

It is relatively easy to obtain understanding and forge a consensus among the IUJ-ELP staff on most program-internal matters, but on issues involving parties both inside and outside the program, this harmony is not always the case. In Japan, as in any foreign country, the hosts' ways of dealing with things sometimes do not seem to make sense. In these situations, the ecological approach proposed by Holliday and Cooke (1982) provides a very useful metaphor. Holliday and Cooke see language programs as existing within" a milieu of attitudes and expectations of all the parties involved...we treat this milieu as an ecosystem within which we have to work. The novelty of our approach lies in the practical implications of this view: the need to accords rights of co-existence to <u>all</u> the competing but interdependent elements of the system, and to work with the system, rather than against or in spite of it, to the greatest extent possible" (Holliday and Cooke 1982:126). The goal of the program is thus to make the best use of local features, both promising and unpromising, so that the long-term viability of the project or program can be assured. In such a situation one crucial function of evaluation is to gather the relevant data on local features and the interests of all the parties functioning within the ecosystem. This approach to program design is especially appropriate for Japan, where the rule is consensus-type decision-making, in which the needs of all relevant parties are typically weighed into a final decision. Attempts to impose different modes of decision-making almost invariably result in frustration.

OPPORTUNITY COST CONSIDERATIONS

John Swales (1989) discusses the importance in curriculum development of understanding the decision-making process that goes into it. He suggests the usefulness of applying the economic concept opportunity cost , defined as "real or full costs, taking into consideration the deficits created by the forced abandonment of other alternatives" (Swales 1989: 82). In other words, every decision involves sacrificing options associated with a different course of action. For example, deciding to adopt Textbook B eliminates the possibility of enjoying the advantages of your current Textbook A, or other textbooks C, D, or E, or no fixed textbook at all. In a sense, focusing on opportunity costs can be seen as conservatizing since it emphasizes the negative implications of any decision, but in fact it equally involves evaluating the costs of not innovating.

A clear-cut case of opportunity cost considerations influencing an IUJ-ELP decision occurred in planning for our 1989 IEP, in which we had to decide whether or not to introduce a new program component focusing explicitly on grammatical accuracy. Although the program director and some of the senior staff felt that such a course would be pedagogically unsound, some of the newer staff members were totally convinced that this type of course was necessary. Furthermore, there was an abundance of anecdotal evidence that most of our students would appreciate such a course. To reject the course meant that the staff members supporting it would then be less committed to the program as a whole, and during a long intensive program, the probability was high that students would somehow find out about this course that had been denied them. Thus, recognizing these opportunity costs, we initiated the course. As a result, the staff members in favor of it worked hard on the curriculum to make it work, students liked it, their post-test scores were encouraging, and even the skeptical instructors who were asked to teach a section of it saw some value in it.

The above case was one in which opportunity cost considerations aided in making a wise curriculum decision. These considerations could be even more applicable when making decisions concerning the program's relationship with its institutional environment, for example, in deciding whether the program should offer new short-term courses, or whether it should become independent of the parent institution. In such situations, Swales (1989) argues that the ecological approach's emphasis on understanding how the system works is not enough, and that the concept of opportunity cost can provide more specific guidance in making the right strategic decisions.

CONCLUSION

Although the literature on language program evaluation is still in its incipient stages, it has already offered some sound and usable ideas. From J.D. Brown (1989) we have taken an overall framework for curriculum development; from Michael Long (1984) we have realized the importance of investigating the process that we assume has produced our program results, and of working toward greater scientific discipline in our evaluation efforts; from Holliday and Cooke (1982) we have gained an appreciation of the need to understand our role as a part of a complex larger system; and from John Swales (1989) we have received an approach to applying the information we have gathered toward making strategic decisions.

Although the IUJ-ELP still suffers to some degree from most of the recurrent problems of program design enumerated by Swales (1989:86), we feel that through our evaluation process, we have been able to make each problem much less severe than it would be otherwise; we have also been able to determine with increasing accuracy which problems we should vigorously continue to try to solve, and which we should simply accept as unfavorable "local features," which may prove in the future to have "positive and exploitable aspects" (Holliday and Cooke, 1982:137).

If there is anything that other programs can learn from us, it is the benefits of making the process and products of evaluation an integral part of program culture. When the evaluation process becomes second nature to a program staff, any weaknesses in the procedures themselves will be overshadowed by the commitment of the staff to the program and the virtual guarantee of ongoing improvement in the future. Furthermore, when the regular reporting of evaluation findings becomes an established practice, in a way that adequately considers the needs of each audience, the chances of obtaining enhanced

institutional support are sure to increase. Finally, it seems reasonable to assume that there are many things that EAP programs around the world can learn from each other; sound evaluation practices of course contribute to having something to say, but by far the most important first step is simply communication. We at the International University of Japan look forward to sharing ideas and experiences with other EAP programs.

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